

Memorandum

THRU :Refuge Supervisor (RF), Anchorage, AK
TO :I & R Coordinator, Anchorage, AK

DATE: October 15, 1979

FROM :Acting Refuge Manager, Kenai NMR, Kenai, AK

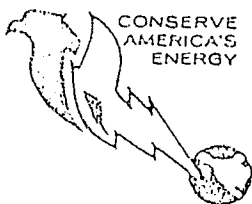
SUBJECT: Recreation Outputs for Kenai National Moose Range I&R Programs

From time to time we are asked what we are doing on the KNMR, in terms of outputs or accomplishments. This question seems a little profound to us at first, but if we really examine the question we find that it is a really simple, straight forward, and important question that must be asked.

I suppose since we have been busy almost all the time, the first reaction is to say, well of course we're doing this, and then again this other item came up. And I guess we have expected you people who are aligning budgets to look into your crystal ball and understand our daily accomplishments and short comings. I think it very important for you to understand that there has been little idle or generally unproductive time spent on the KNMR this spring, summer, and early fall. I also feel as though it is our responsibility to "beat our drum" so to speak concerning accomplishments and programs. It is also our job to inform you when we simply made it through another recreation season serving a substantial portion of Alaska's visitors without impacting the refuge or "drowning" in the annual flood of wildlife related public use. Communications have not been the best in this area, and if anything, I am determined to keep you and your staff well informed in the future.

In the past six months, several new techniques and programs for managing public use have been enacted on the Kenai National Moose Range. They include: backcountry canoeing registration, solid waste management, interpretation of refuge history and resources, monitoring human use impacts, greatly increased personal contact with the public, litter control measures, cyclic facility maintenance, and a revised tent camp policy.

1. The Swan Lake-Swanson River Canoe Routes have been a very popular back-country boating area since the building of new trails made it accessible in the 1960's. Visitor use for the 1979 season has been worked by certain brief periods of high-use such as Memorial Day weekend, but has generally experienced the lowest use in the past 5-6 years. Visitor use, the previous years, showed a continued increase which sparked an interest in accomplishing three new programs.



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- a. Distribute information on wise use of the area to entering groups.
- b. Reduce impacts of visitors on the area during visits.
- c. Initiate a formal program of site impact monitoring.

A backcountry registration system was initiated for the area which included a detachable tag containing information to be kept with groups in the area. The groups would also leave a stub at the trailhead which included information which could later be used to examine the profile of users in the area. This registration tag included helpful hints for having a wilderness experience and reducing impacts. They included reduction in group size, hints for minimum impact camping, dispersing use, and safety hints. Specific benefits to our program appear initially to be a more informed public, less littering, accurate monitoring of user characteristics, a regulation compliance tool, and informing the public that the area is a managed recreation area on the KNMR. We estimate 90% of the groups using the area complied with our new system and we received no complaints on its use. The registration requires no reservations and is easy for canoeists to use.

In conjunction with the use of the backcountry registration for canoers, we improved trailhead signing which included: silk screen canoe signs, refuge regulations, a brochure dispenser, and "pack it home" litter signs. We estimate at least 800-1000 plus canoe brochures were dispensed at the all weather trailhead dispensers.

The canoe system also was monitored for the first time by a full time "canoe trail patrolman". This employee was used to direct refuge quality control on Y.C.C. projects in the area, public contact, regulation compliance and to initiate the first phase of a Code-A-Site monitoring program.

Code-A-Site is a dispersed recreation monitoring tool which was developed as a longitudinal management tool for inventorying camping impacts. It was developed by the U.S. Forest Service in Region 6 and has been used successfully by both the Forest Service and Park Service in the lower 48. It's initiation on the Kenai National Moose Range is still in its early stages and represents one of its first applications in Alaska. If successful, this inventorying of dispersed camping sites will be applied to other areas on the KNMR. (See Code-A-Site Information). An inventory of this nature should be the first phase of a planning effort within various areas of the KNMR.

2. Russian River has been a topic familiar to us all, and much of our attention has been directed to the management of this small complex. The 1979 season at Russian River was marked by certain peak days which tended in the direction of previous year's high use, however, weekdays seemed somewhat down in use from 1978 (probably due to highway closure, and fewer tourists from out of state). Interviews with Sterling Highway

restaurants and service stations, indicated very low weekday travel and above average weekend travel. Subsequently, though overall use may have been slightly down, one day visitation at least seemed to equal previous years high use days. Additionally, emergency closures reduced actual fishing days considerably this year. The rapid surge of salmon in early August, however, prompted very heavy use for a short duration (7 days) once the fishing was open.

Programs that were initiated this season included litter control measures, increased personnel available at the site, better orientation for visitors, increased law enforcement, a new interpretive display, more efficient solid waste disposal, improved facility design, and improved facility maintenance.

The litter control program was partially a success and will be continued during 1980. Employees were only partially successful in keeping excessive disposable containers from being carried across in the ferry. Litter, however, was less than in previous years and several complimentary remarks have been received from longtime users of the area concerning its appearance this year. This program could be improved if additional personnel were available to make additional contacts at the ferry crossing or through increased assistance from ferry employees. A "litter incentive" program was also used with much success at our Russian River facility this summer and to our knowledge represents its first application in Alaska. Both U.S.F.S. and refuge personnel used the incentive litter control program within their respective campgrounds. The incentive program was also developed by the Pacific Northwest Forest and Range Experiment Station, Wildwood Recreation Branch, U.S.F.S., Region 6. Described briefly, the program utilizes children of campers and fishermen in the area to collect ground litter. Refuge personnel received permission from parents and supervised a group of "assistants" to do a litter patrol. The young assistants are then given their "incentive" which sometimes consists of a junior ranger card, a "Smokey Bear" patch, a Fish & Wildlife poster, or some other miscellaneous award. This program seems to work well in concentrated high use situations. Hopefully, this program provides a deterrent to adults littering and simply, puts more souls on the "good guys" team, to assist in picking up litter. We hope to develop a formal award packet for incentives next year. This program can combine public contact, campground patrol, outdoor education, and volunteer assistance all at the same time. It is quite popular with everyone.

The fee collection program and entrance station should be considered a success as far as increased contact with the public, much improved distribution of written and verbal refuge information are concerned. Also, it provides a central location for initiating other programs. Its weaknesses include drawing valuable employee time from other programs (i.e., litter patrol, maintenance, visitor contact station, and public contact). In terms of outputs over 1500 brochures were distributed and over 6000 persons were contacted or engaged in conversation with refuge employees at the Russian River Area.

Information and interpretive signs, added to the Russian River Area, include three information boards all of which add to visitor orientation and proper use of the area. Also, an interpretive display was completed and available for public viewing as of August 1, and in time for the second run of salmon, and associated visitors. The interpretive panels were designed by Kenai's recreation staff and completed by artist Boyd Shaffer of Kenai Peninsula Community College. The display consists of six 36' by 40' removable panels and are located near the Russian River ferry landing. Three panels tell the complete life cycle of the sockeye salmon in sequence collage. This interpretive display is viewed by the Kenai staff as a major success ranking with any display on the Kenai Peninsula. It combines a visual story with optional narrative. The display is designed to tell a story to all ages including those who choose not to read any captions. The display is specifically designed to foster a wise and informed use of the sockeye salmon resource. The additional three interpretive panels depict early native use of wildlife resources on the Kenai National Moose Range and particularly their dependence on sockeye salmon for sustenance. The display was designed after research of Tanaina history, interviews with living Tanainas and interviews with informed archeologists. The display incorporates the recently translated Tanaina written language to label pictorals within the display. Tanaina was an oral language and has only recently been made a written one. For the brief time period the display was available to visitors during August, it appeared to be quite popular. It is safe to say that several thousand visitors have derived benefits from it already and approximately 50% of the fishermen and their families appeared to be reading it. Visitors seem to be taking pictures and offering positive comments. This interpretive display will also be taken down and put up inside the new refuge visitor (learning) center at Headquarters Lake. This way we hope to make the best use of it.

Though the Russian River "scene" will always be one that challenges our combined efforts, the key to its successful management is having employees available to get the miscellaneous duties completed. This involves having employees available for as many hours as possible and living in the area. This year we worked out an agreement with Wildlife Research, and utilized a house trailer at a nearby refuge site. Justified by operation improvements this summer, due to personnel availability, we believe we need more personnel, temporary refuge housing and expanded hours of availability to the public on the east central portion of the refuge. Output-benefits to the public and to wildlife were considerable with this daily personnel attention. By having housing available on location, we estimate at least 500 hours saved in travel hours alone (new outputs?)

Other improvements at Russian River are of the management by design philosophy and generally followed guidelines in the interim management plan for the area. They seem to confine impacts to the "hardened" areas and buffer areas were additionally protected. Overall appearance of the facility was much improved by completion of a log fence, visual barriers, and redesign of vehicular areas.

Placement of parking bumpers helped control vehicle traffic, and protect vegetation. We hope to compile information from this previous summer and further improve design for 1980. Also a new restroom was constructed, alleviating frequent pumping of the present facility. A walk-in tent camping area was also provided and this area was quite successful, allowing tenters to obtain a much improved camping situation and also maintaining an option for users other than large motorhomes. We have received several positive comments concerning the tent camping area. The walk-in tent camp area added to the "green space" around the parking area and protected that area from uncontrolled vehicle parking.

3. During the spring preparation for the 1979 recreation season, several programs were initiated to manage Kenai's many roadside facilities. With so many facilities available, we decided to reduce services in certain areas, while increasing services in other, more popular areas. In general, we hoped to reduce the volume of daily garbage removal, reduce possibilities of wildlife-people conflicts, improve the appearance of several facilities, and free employees for other duty. In keeping with this goal, literally dozens of garbage cans were never installed during the spring of 1979. A "pack it home" program was initiated at many disposal areas thus freeing employees for priority areas. A dumpster contract was initiated at Russian River, Hidden Lake, and Jim's Landing Visitor facilities. These campgrounds subsequently were maintained in a much improved condition. One visitor to Hidden Lake campground remarked that during Memorial Day weekend, the appearance of the campground was the best he had observed in 7 years. In short, we have concentrated solid waste management at high use areas and have tried to make other facilities self managing (refer to recreational facility definition and classifications). This program has been partially successful and will continue next year. Remote facilities have had much less litter and have taken less employee effort than in the past. In conjunction with this program, we established individual territories for each summer employee. Employees were housed, if possible, near their work site, such as the three employees at Russian River. As was the case at Russian River, this successfully constituted fewer hours per day to be allowed for travel to and from work sites. Again, an increased number of seasonal employees, as well as a more efficient use of their time, showed significant minor improvements in services available to the public. Having more employee hours free from "throwing garbage cans" increased time spent in face to face public contact, compliance patrols, facility maintenance, and overall refuge employee visibility. We hope to continue along the same lines next year.

Maintenance programs for this year showed outputs in placement of new fire rings in all campgrounds and some access areas. Old fire rings were replaced by new metal conduit rings. These fire rings were constructed and installed by Y.A.C.C. staff and refuge recreation staff. Barrier posts, parking bumpers, and signs were also replaced in several campgrounds.

Though backcountry trails are in a much needed state of maintenance, several projects were completed including trail signing, trail brushing, and trail surface improvement. With the aid of Y.C.C., a significant amount of trail work was completed on the canoe system and a new bridge was built across Swanson River. The bridge was inspected and refortified by refuge staff

in September. Trails are an area of concern to the recreation staff, and trail planning as well as maintenance for the trail system will be an area of interest for the coming year.

4. During the August and September hunting season, traditional programs as well as new programs were used to monitor hunter use and characteristics. During August, observers were placed at several mountain lakes. This program allows us an exact count on Dall sheep and bears harvested, as well as a public contact with a generally difficult to monitor activity. During the September 1-20 moose season, hunter check stations were established on Mystery Creek and Swanson River Road. Swanson River Road is open year around and Mystery Creek is open only for the month of September. This program has been very popular with the public as well as with various staff. Employees of the check stations asked hunters various questions pertaining to: harvest success, where they hunted, other activities, length of stay, previous visits to the refuge area, etc. The check stations contacted over 600 parties during the Labor Day weekend. The stations were operated for biological and public use information as well as a subtle law enforcement/public contact tool (see data). This program was initiated and partially manned by Kenai's recreation staff. Contacts with hunters and other recreationists were informal and pleasant and refuge personnel were able to assist hunting parties in complying with refuge and state regulations. A preliminary look at the information gathered shows many other recreationists took advantage of the opening of Mystery Creek Road and that many parties were engaged in multiple recreational activities.

5. During this fall, much needed maintenance of roads, culverts, and campgrounds continued using seasonal personnel as well as full time maintenance staff. The primary project for this fall, which is underway at the present, is replacing gaskets in all refuge wells. If not complete this fall, this project will be finished early next spring.

6. During August and September, a draft plan was developed for future operation of commercial tent camps and is in the draft stage of review at this level. This plan should include a complete package for allocation and management of these areas. We will be meeting with all operators in October and finalizing the program. Research and background for this program included a comprehensive review of records back to the 1950's on swans and other wildlife files of each operator, review of the Wilderness Act, and interviews with past refuge employees.

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KENAI NATIONAL MOOSE RANGE
RECREATIONAL FACILITIES CLASSIFICATION AND INVENTORY

- A. Background: The Kenai National Moose Range is located on the Kenai Peninsula and contains 1,730,000 acres of forest, lake, muskeg, alpine, and mountain. In order for the general public to enjoy - recreate - on such a vast area, it is reasonable to assume that a single day's visit would be insufficient. With this premise in mind, recreational development has followed a course of providing physical space where a visitor may spend more than one day, as a base point from which to enjoy the remaining area. It is also reasonable to assume that if more than one person, or more than one family group, congregates on a single site, facilities must be provided to meet their needs i.e. our problems, such as sanitary facilities, drinking water, litter control. These two premises, coupled with the limited road access provide the basis for recreational facilities development on the Kenai National Moose Range.

Generally, site development, and more importantly, site location, has followed a pattern of providing basic access to a river, lake, or trail in relation to fishing, hunting, wildlands appreciation, (hiking, back-packing), berrypicking, or general enjoyment of the outdoors (wilderness, in the minds of the individual user), supported by the ability of the site of either allow for, or accommodate overnight use.

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B. DEFINITIONS/CLASSIFICATION

Administratively, it is convenient to classify each site with a definite title (classification) in order to clarify and improve communications in dealing with recreational sites or facilities. The following is a classification of recreational facilities, with definitions for each.

1. Campground: Area designed to accommodate overnight use and provide basic access; must contain the following improvements:
 - a. All weather access road (to, and within site)
 - b. Individual camping spurs (campsites)
 - c. Picnic tables (one per spur)
 - d. Fire grates (one per spur)
 - e. Drinking water (well)
 - f. Toilet facilities
 - g. Dumpster (optional)
 - h. Orientation sign and fee collection safe
 - i. May include interpretive signing or exhibits

Optional improvements include boat ramp, firewood supply, or a general parking area (in conjunction with boat ramp).

2. Access site: Areas which provide for vehicular parking and support basic access; minimal improvements but do not contain individual camping spurs. Generally consist of a rectangular gravel parking area delineated by log barriers; not specifically designed to accommodate overnight use. Access sites may contain the following improvements:
 - a. Picnic tables (Optional)
 - b. Fire grates
 - c. Dumpsters, clustered garbage cans, "Pack it home" signs
 - d. Toilet facilities
 - e. Drinking water (well)
 - f. Entrance and/or orientation sign (optional)
 - g. May include interpretive signs
3. Trailheads: Areas which provide for vehicular parking in conjunction with use of established hiking and horseback trails (basic access to interior of Moose Range). Trailheads generally consist of graveled parking areas, delineated by barrier logs, trailhead signs, and "Pack it-home" litter signs
4. Waysides: Small graveled area which provides for off-road parking. Some waysides may have barrier posts, most are simply graveled pull-offs. May include "Pack it home" garbage signs and interpretive signing.

C. RECREATIONAL FACILITIES INVENTORY LIST

	Campground	Access Site	Wayside	Trailhead
1. Sunken Island Lake		X		
2. Mosquito Lake		X		
3. Silver Lake				X
4. Forest Lake			X	
5. Week Lake			X	
6. Drake/Skookum Lakes				X
7. Breeze Lake		X		
8. Dolly Varden Lake	X			
9. Rainbow Lake		X		
10. Swanson River Landing		X		
11. Fish Lake		X		
12. Canoe Lake				X
13. Sucker Creek			X	
14. Merganser Lakes		X		
15. Nest Lake		X		
16. Portage Lake		X		
17. Paddle Lake				X
18. Bottenintnin Lake		X		
19. Lower Skilak Lake	X			
20. Engineer Lake		X		X
21. Lower Ohmer Lake		X		
22. Upper Skilak Lake	X			
23. Upper Ohmer Lake		X		
24. Bear Mtn. Trail				X
25. Skilak Lookout Trail				X
26. Hidden Creek Trail				X
27. Hidden Lake	X			
28. Kenai River Trail (2 sites)				X
29. Jim's Landing	X			
30. Jean Creek			X	
31. Kenai-Russian River		X		
32. Kenai River			X	
33. Fuller Lakes Trail				X
34. Jean Lake		X		
35. Skyline Trail				X
36. Upper Jean Lake		X		
37. Jean Lake		X		
38. Kelly Lake		X		
39. Pettersen Lake		X		
40. Watson Lake		X		
41. Egumen Lake				X
42. East Fork Moose River			X	
43. Lily Lake			X	
44. Funny River Horse Trail				X
45. Ski Hill		X		X
46. Tustumena Lake	X			
	6	22	7	14